

The Word of the Cross

Read: 1 Cor 1:1-31 and 1 Cor 2:1-5

The word of the cross is diametrically opposed to the ways of the world or the natural man.

John 12:24 ... *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit".*

Matt 23:11 ... *"But the greatest among you shall be your servant"*

Mark 9:35 ... *"If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."*

Luke 6:38 ... *"Give, and it will be given to you".*

Prov 3:5-12 ... *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart ... My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights"*

1 Cor 1:18 ... *"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"*

"The word" is the direct translation from the Greek – "the logos" (ὁ λόγος)

This is exactly the same "the logos" (ὁ λόγος) that appears in John 1:1, 14 and we know that "the Word" there refers to Christ, the only begotten from the Father.

So what 1 Cor 1:18 is really saying is:

"For the Word, Christ, who is the embodiment of the principle of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, the ones in whom Christ dwells, He is the liberating power of God".

This is confirmed in:

1 Cor 1:23-24 ... *"but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God".*

1 Cor 1:30 ... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption".*

That's why Paul could write the words of Eph 3:20 to the Ephesians believers, which are also addressed to us ("*the faithful in Christ Jesus*" Eph 1:1):

Eph 3:20 ... *"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen".*

The answer to your every need resides within you and His name is Jesus Christ. He is the word, Christ, The power of God.

Christ Having Been Crucified

1 Cor 1:23 ... *"but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness".*

and

1 Cor 2:2 ... *"For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified".*

A little grammatical technicality – but of great relevance:

In the Greek text the **"perfect passive participle"** is used – which means the literal translation should be: Christ ***"having been crucified"***.

You may ask, "what is the difference between 'Christ crucified' and 'Christ having been crucified'?"

Christ **crucified** means – He was crucified, died and was buried, carried away our sin and sickness. That's only half of the gospel.

Christ **having been crucified** means – Yes, He was crucified, died, was buried, paid the price for our sin but that was not the end of it all, for then he was made alive and He rose up, ascended on high above all principalities and power and every name that is named and now He is alive and lives forever and He lives in you and me and is the power of God at work within us to His glory. That's the full gospel!

"... but we preach Christ having been crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness"...

... "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him having been crucified".

He crushed Satan underfoot, He's alive and He is the power of God unto salvation at work in you!

Rikki Tikki Tavi

Rudyard Kipling wrote a book, The Jungle Book (1894), in which he has a short story in it called "Rikki Tikki Tavi" – about a valiant young mongoose.

A 19th-century English family — who have moved to a bungalow in the jungles of Sugauli cantonment in Bihar State, India (NE India bordering with Nepal) — discover a young mongoose half drowned and washed downstream by a flood. They revive it and decide to keep it as a pet. Soon after this the young mongoose, named Rikki Tikki Tavi, finds himself confronted by two dangerous king cobras, Nag and his even more dangerous wife Nagaina, who had the run of the garden while the house was unoccupied.

These were dangerous snakes. Less than a teaspoon full of their venom could kill an elephant. The little mongoose knew only too well how lethal they were. But he also knew that there was one place where the snake was vulnerable; the base of his head just above the hood. Anyone who has seen a mongoose in action with a cobra knows that they are very focussed. They will move with incredible speed and agility and in an instant they will suddenly leap and grab the snake by the base of the head just above the hooded part. And they will hold on relentlessly until they crush the skull and kill the snake.

After the encounter with the cobras, Rikki's first true battle is with Karait, a small dust brown snake who has a go at the young English boy Teddy. This little snake is more deadly than the king cobra because of its lethal venom, however the mongoose intervenes and kills it, and the grateful family praise their pet mongoose for rescuing their son.

Then, after everyone is asleep, Rikki Tikki goes out for his nightly walk around the house and runs into Chuchundra the muskrat. Chuchundra had been told by his cousin Chua, the rat, who also lives in the garden, that Nag and Nagaina were planning something terrible, so he passes on this information and warning to Rikki Tikki.

Rikki Tikki then hears a faint scratching sound that he knows to be Nag or Nagaina lurking around the bathroom sluice. He steals off quietly to the bathroom and listens and hears the cobras' whispering outside. At Nagaina's urging, Nag plans to kill the human family to empty the house so the cobras can once again rule the garden. She also reminds him that their eggs, laid and hidden in the garden, would hatch soon (possibly even the next day) and that their brood will need room and quiet. Nag goes to the bathroom to wait to kill the "big man". Rikki follows and in a flash leaps and bites the cobra by the head above the hood. Nag thrashes about furiously, nearly beating Rikki Tikki to death, but Rikki Tikki holds on for dear life. The noise wakes the man, who comes running out with his gun and fires both barrels of the shotgun into Nag, blowing him in two pieces and almost hitting Rikki. Nag is then thrown on the rubbish heap, where Nagaina mourns for him and vows vengeance.

Rikki, well aware of the threat, enlists the help of Darzee's wife (Darzee is the Tailor Bird), to distract Nagaina while he searches for her eggs. While Rikki finds and destroys most of the brood (biting off the tops of the eggs and crushing the young cobras), Nagaina corners the family at the breakfast table on the veranda ("they sat stone-still, and their faces were white") and threatens to kill Teddy with her venomous bite. Alerted by Darzee's wife, Rikki races to the veranda with the last egg still in his mouth. His appearance distracts Nagaina long enough for the man to pull the boy to safety. Rikki Tikki provokes Nagaina into a final fight with neither opponent gaining the upper hand until Nagaina snatches the egg and flees to her hole, with Rikki in pursuit. The underground fight is not described, but after an agonizingly long time, Rikki comes out of the hole in triumph, having killed Nagaina. After this victory Rikki spends the rest of his days defending the family garden where no snakes dare to enter.

Satan the Serpent of Old

Paul did not underestimate the danger Satan posed to the Corinthian Church or to us today. Paul warned them and he warns us about the "serpent", Satan who is out to deceive and poison us:

2 Cor 11:3 ... *"But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of **devotion to Christ**".*

Satan is just as deadly a foe towards unsuspecting Christians as a cobra is towards a mongoose. For this reason Paul, like the mongoose, maintained a very sharp focus and encourages us to do the same. Paul resolved ...*"to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him having been crucified"*. He knew that to us who believe that ... *"the word of the cross is the power of God"*.

Satan is fearful of believers and churches that focus on the "word of the cross" and know that He, Christ, is the power of God that is within them enabling them to walk in the victory that He has won.

Rudyard Kipling describes the moment when Rikki Tikki Tavi had his face off with a cobra for the first time:

He was afraid for a minute, but it is impossible for a mongoose to stay frightened for any length of time, and though Rikki-Tikki-Tavi had never met a live cobra before, his mother had fed him on dead ones, and he knew that all a grown mongoose's business in life was to fight and eat snakes. Nag (the cobra) knew that too and, at the bottom of his cold heart, he was afraid.

Satan is not afraid of Christians who believe in Jesus Christ crucified, but he is very fearful of those who are **focused** and who **know** and believe in Jesus Christ having been crucified, who did not remain on the cross or in the grave but who through His resurrection and ascension crushed Satan's head and rose up victorious and in whom we have the victory. Oh yes, of such believers he is very frightened.

Don't be fooled or mesmerised by the "serpent" that you can play around with sin. Don't be drawn into focussing more on the sin or the ways of the world, or trying to work things out the world's way (trying to "help" God), but let your **focus** be on the victory Jesus gained for you and the fact that He is the power of God resident in you. Like the mongoose, focus on the devil's weak point – he cannot prevail against the word of the cross.

Resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him having been crucified. Know that the word of the cross is to you the power of God. **Apply the word of the cross** to whatever you are facing. Christ and His word are one. What He says believe and act upon, and you will see the answer. Just as Jesus said ... *"it is written"* when He faced Satan in the wilderness. So should you should focus on and hold fast to the word that is relevant to your particular situation. See Christ the power of God within you as your answer and walk in victory.

Final Prayer

... "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power

and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all". (Eph 1:17-23)

... "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen". (Eph 3:20-21)